

# **Human Resources Officers' Role in Supporting Fleet Operational Requirements**

**L. Andrew Jones, Ph.D.**

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## Foreword

The United States Navy's Human Resources (HR) officer community was established to bridge a divide between government civilian HR professionals, many of whom lack an appreciation of operational requirements, and unrestricted line officers, many of whom lack familiarity with HR theory and large-scale human resources management. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a gap between what HR officers provide to operational forces and what unrestricted line officers believe HR officers can and should provide. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that Human Resources officers' role in supporting fleet operational requirements do not meet unrestricted line officers' expectations. This study attempts to quantify and articulate this split. This research attempts to enumerate these perceptions and draw conclusions about unrestricted line officers' perceptions of the role of Human Resources officers in supporting fleet operational requirements.

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## Human Resources Officers' Role in Supporting Fleet Operational Requirements

The military services are one of the largest employers in the United States (U.S.) with almost 2,800,000 people in uniform—of these, over 380,000 serve on active duty in the U.S. Navy (Defense Almanac, 2002; G. L. Hoewing, personal communication, November 3, 2003). With a Navy of this size, Naval leaders are challenged to provide operational commanders with human resources (HR) assets necessary to carry out National Command Authority policy and direction, meet operational contingency requirements, and support warfighting demands.

Historically, Naval leaders have relied on civilian HR professionals and unrestricted line (URL) officers (i.e., those officers whose career paths lead to command of operational units) to establish, administer, and manage policies and procedures that govern human resources. But, many government civilian workers have no active Naval service experience. As a result, government civilian workers' appreciation of the intricacies and hardships associated with service at sea or the unique demands of service ashore in foreign lands may be beyond reach. On the other hand, unrestricted line officers' knowledge of myriad theories, concepts, and constructs involved in developing policy and guidance for the administration of a naval workforce has not provided desired results either. Unrestricted line officers have a unique appreciation of operational requirements, but they are substantially disadvantaged when asked to incorporate human resources theories with activities inherent in large-scale human resources management.

To bridge this divide, then Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Admiral Norbert Ryan, with the consent of the Chief of Naval Operations and Navy Secretary, authorized the Navy's Human Resources officer community. Established in October 2001, this cadre of highly specialized naval leaders fill a gap between the knowledge and experience of government civilian human resources specialists and that of active duty Naval officers. Ryan describes his vision of the Navy's HR officer community.

As a member of this core of career professionals, you will lead the Navy in the tough competition to recruit, train, and retain sailors, as well as work the challenges of balancing military, civilian, and contracted capabilities. The Human Resources Community will be fully focused on aligning "people" policies and processes with the Navy's overall maritime mission, providing expertise in strategic human resources planning, programming, and execution. (August 1, 2001, personal communication)

Navy HR roles have traditionally been built around three key elements: (a) strategic planning, (b) operational execution, and (c) administrative management (Anderson & Vanderberg, 2003). As Vice Admiral Ryan describes above, the HR community is meant to provide "expertise in strategic human resources planning, programming and execution" (August 1, 2001, personal communication). Today's HR officer community does this and more, including: (a) strategic planning, (b) manpower management, (c) recruitment, (d) education and training, (e) personnel force management, (f)

administration, and (g) human resource information technology (Anderson & Vanderberg, 2003). These functions are performed at activities around the world and across a spectrum of assignment possibilities.

## The Operational Environment

The description of Navy HR activities and the HR community thus far explains what the Community is and what it currently does, but does not describe what unrestricted line officers (i.e., warfighters) want and need in HR support or how HR officers and the HR community might better meet these needs.

Before attempting to answer these questions, a description of "the operational environment" for purposes of this discussion is required. Although it can be argued that countless operational environments exist, service at sea, and more specifically, service in surface ships will be used as a proxy here.

Service in ships is a physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding existence that is not for the faint of heart. The lifestyle of Sailors at sea requires a deep personal commitment to duty and the prompt, timely execution of activities that, at times, require total dependence on others, and at other times, complete autonomy and decision making authority. It has been said that a ship at sea resembles a city—a city complete with its own emergency services, public works department, recreation services, city council (appointed rather than elected), and mayor (commanding officer). In a divergence from a typical city though, this fully self-contained unit has an ability to propel itself around the globe, generate its own electricity, conduct flight operations, and engage enemies in armed combat—something a city cannot do. It is unrealistic to expect to capture even a limited description of service at sea here; instead, a discussion of HR's involvement in operational activities required at sea helps focus subsequent discussions.

As previously stated, the HR officer community performs an array of functions, but which of these activities are most important to the warfighter? How do URL officers view these activities within the context of the mission? Which of these activities require increased emphasis, redesign, or elimination? What voids exist in HR support? How can the HR community better meet warfighters' demands? Do URL officers expect HR officers to serve at sea with them—helping to shoulder the burden of sea duty or, do they prefer that HR officers provide support from ashore? These questions provide the impetus for this study. They form the thrust of this investigation, which aims to better comprehend URL officers' attitudes about HR functions, activities, and the HR community.

## HR Community Past and Present

The Navy's HR community is rooted in the Fleet Support Officer (FSO) community, which itself was born in 1994 from the former General Unrestricted Line (GURL) community. The GURL community was originally established to provide a shore-based non-warfighting officer community that afforded women an opportunity to specialize in

Naval facilities management, manpower and personnel, training, or information technology support (Anderson & Vanderberg, 2003). But grouping these generally unrelated business activities under a single officer category led to impressions that these officers were expected to be "jacks of all trades, masters of none."

With the repeal of the combat exclusion law, the GURL community and its descendant, the FSO community, became moot. The breakup of the FSO community led to the division of its officers by its three core competencies: (a) logistics support; (b) space and electronic warfare; and (c) manpower, personnel, and training (Barber, 2003; Murdy, 1999). It is the last of these that became the Navy's HR community.

As one of the Navy's non-warfighting officer communities, the GURL and the FSO were viewed as convenient communities to place officers who, for a variety of reasons, did not measure up to warfighting demands. Often, officers who "were considered poor in health or performance" were placed in these communities as a final retention option (Barber, 2003, p. 9). This raised credibility concerns from sources both internal and external to these communities. Decisions to retain rather than separate marginally qualified and minimally performing officers tarnished the reputations of these communities. This checkered past continues to be carried forward today as the historical structure underlying the present-day HR community.

Efforts to overcome past sins and build credibility have begun, but current efforts might be misguided. Today's Community admissions criteria focus on warfare qualification as a proxy for credibility. The prevailing thought is that warfare qualification equates to increased credibility since those who are supported (i.e., unrestricted line officers) place a high value on warfare qualification. This is potentially flawed because the emergence of the HR community from its past has resulted in a shift from the unrestricted line to the restricted line. With this shift comes a refocusing from warfighter to supporting cast. That is, HR officers are, by design, restricted line officers whose mission is to support warfighters, not be warfighters. Recent lateral transfer statistics highlight this trend. As late as 2003, transfers from other officer communities to the HR community were occurring at rates of (a) 6 percent from aviation, (b) 8 percent from Fleet Support, (c) 7 percent from Limited Duty, (d) 9 percent from other restricted line/staff corps categories, and (e) 70 percent from the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community (Anderson & Vanderberg, 2003).

This, then, presents a dichotomy. If HR officers are not warfighters, but warfare qualification gives credence and credibility to the Community, then how can HR officers and the HR community build credibility and support the warfighter without using warfare qualification as a measure? The real questions are: (a) What roles do unrestricted line officers perceive should be filled by HR officers? and (b) Does the HR community have the skills and credibility necessary to provide warfighters with the HR support needed from these roles?

## Method

This study was designed to be exploratory in nature and ex post facto in design with elements of a quasi-experimental study included in order to more fully describe and generalize the data across a larger spectrum of unrestricted line officers Navy-wide. A quantitative empirical study was undertaken to measure attitudes of unrestricted line officers during a cross-sectional time period of approximately two weeks (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This study took place in an actual field setting during normal business hours.

This research was designed to use inferential and descriptive statistics to describe data gathered in a Likert-type scale format. Factor analysis provided a means to arrive at seven underlying psychological constructs. Measures of central tendency were employed and multivariate *t* tests were used to compare population means.

### Instrumentation

A 2-section questionnaire was developed, field tested, and pilot tested specifically for this study. The instrument was developed using expert opinion from unrestricted line officers, Human Resources officers, and collegial academic sources. This facilitated the establishment of face and content validity of the instrument.

The first section solicits demographic and personal information relating to the eight test factors of sex, age, education, race/ethnicity, length of naval service, rank, designator, and extent of experience with HR officers. Section 2 uses a 5-point Likert-type format on a 5 to 1 scale to measure perceptions. In this scale, 5 indicates *strongly agree* through 1, which indicates *strongly disagree*. A response of N/A indicates *not applicable*. The 71 questions are designed to elicit responses based on 7 sub-question categories. Each of these seven subcategories is distilled further into a number of segmented questions.

The 7 subcategories and 71 Likert-type scaled questions were developed through the same method used to establish the 8 principal trait identifiers. Responses provided by a group of unrestricted line officers and Human Resources officers along with academic and literary sources suggested that the questions should relate to: (a) activities HR officers perform, (b) unrestricted line officers' view of HR officers' roles, (c) HR officer assignment selection options, (d) HR officers' role in operational positions, (e) HR officers' role in support positions, (f) HR officers' degree of participation in operational units, and (g) unrestricted line officers general attitudinal perceptions of HR officers. The 71 Likert-type scaled questions were created using this same process. Following initial development of the instrument, copies were distributed among a group of experts ( $n = 5$ ) for review and analysis. Changes to the instrument were made based on feedback in order to ensure maximum face and content validity.

Testing of the 8 test factors against the 71 Likert-type scaled questions helped reduce the possibility of reaching false conclusions and increased confidence that results reflected an accurate description of the relationship under study and increased generalizability of the study.

## Participants

The population studied was U.S. Navy unrestricted line officers assigned to Navy Personnel Command (NPC) during Spring 2004. Two criteria were required for participation in this study: (a) officers must be unrestricted line officers as defined by the U.S. Navy and (b) be assigned to Navy Personnel Command at the time of survey. All unrestricted line officers assigned to NPC during Spring 2004 ( $N = 174$ ) were surveyed as a convenience sample of the population. Performing survey analysis within this sampling frame kept this research manageable; however, limiting the scope of this research to NPC potentially constrained the generalizability of the research to the larger population of unrestricted line officers Navy-wide.

Of the total population, 104 usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 59.8 percent. Missing and/or improperly reported data elements in 24 returned surveys resulted in fewer than the total response ( $n = 104$ ) being reported in each of the trait category statistics.

Study results indicate 88.5 percent of respondents were male. The participant's mean ( $M$ ) age was 38.3 years with a standard deviation ( $SD$ ) of 6.5. Two-thirds ( $n = 69$ ) (67.0%) of 103 respondents hold master's degrees. All remaining respondents ( $n = 34$ ), (33.0%) reported having baccalaureate degrees. Six categories of race/ethnicity were offered. Of these, 82.4 percent reported being of White/European American decent, 9.8 percent classified themselves as Black/African American, 3.9 percent listed multicultural/other, 2.0 percent classified themselves as Hispanic (all origins), and 1.0 percent for each of the categories of Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American/Alaskan Native respectively. The mean length of service was 15.6 years ( $SD = 5.8$ ). Respondents reported in five of the rank categories. Of these, the highest percentage was lieutenant commander (LCDR) at 35.0 percent, followed by commander (CDR) at 27.2 percent, lieutenant (LT) at 23.3 percent, captain (CAPT) at 12.6 percent, and lieutenant junior grade (LTJG) at 1.9 percent. Breakdown by community indicated that the majority of respondents came from the Surface Warfare community at 37.3 percent. The combined Naval Aviator and Naval Flight Officer communities provided the next largest participation at 36.3 percent. Fleet Support community respondents comprised 13.7 percent followed by the Submarine community at 10.8 percent, and both Special Warfare and Special Operations communities at 1.0 percent each. Lastly, URL's degree of experience with HR officers was solicited. Of the 5 categories, 49.5 percent reported serving with between 0–3 HR officers, 24.2 percent reported working with 4–6, 12.1 percent reported working with 7–10, 5.1 percent stated they have worked with 11–15, and 9.1 percent indicated they have worked with more than 16 HR officers during the last 2 years.

## Results

"Factor analysis attempts to identify underlying variables, or factors, that explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables" (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [SPSS], 2004, p. 1). Principal component factor analysis was performed on survey questions 9 through 80 using Eigenvalues greater than 1 as a baseline for determining the number of latent factors underlying the item response data. The 16 identified factors accounted for 79.18 percent of the values. A scree plot indicated that a fewer number of factors might actually sufficiently represent the underlying latent data structure. Based on interpretation of the scree plot, it was determined that constraining the number of factors to seven adequately represented the data. Revised factor structure accounted for 58.79 percent of total. A review of the 7-component factor matrix revealed that responses grouped to themes in the survey instrument. Following a review of response groupings, category headings were created and descriptions developed for each of the seven factor underlying themes. These descriptions follow:

1. *Manpower, Personnel, and Training (MPT)*. These questions relate to HR officers filling manpower and personnel management assignments, administrative staff activities, or training officer assignments.
2. *Administrative; Legal; and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (ALM)*. Questions in this category refer to duties in administration management; legal administration; or in morale, welfare, and recreation roles.
3. *Shipboard Activities (SA)*. Questions in this category refer to shipboard duties such as conning officer, junior officer of the deck, officer of the deck (underway), tactical action officer, engineering officer of the watch, repair locker officer, helicopter control officer, or landing signals officer.
4. *Planning, Operations, and Analysis (POA)*. These questions refer to duties in strategic planning, research and development, metrics/statistical analysis, operations analysis, and business operations.
5. *Qualifications and Credibility (QC)*. Questions in this category refer to HR officers' specialized qualifications for HR duties. It includes questions that identify underlying perceptions of HR community credibility.
6. *Assignments to Sea (AS)*. Questions in this category refer to HR officers serving in sea duty assignments. Questions ask whether HR officers should be assigned to duty aboard ships, submarines, deployable aircraft squadrons, in special warfare/special operations units, or as members of operational staffs.
7. *Safety (S)*. Questions in this category refer to HR officers serving in safety management roles, both afloat and ashore.



Tables 1a and 1b provide a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization, which depicts question factor loading by component-grouped category. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine internal consistencies of the seven factors. Reliability for the seven factors computed are: (a) MPT ( $\alpha = .9182$ ); (b) ALM ( $\alpha = .8968$ ); (c) SA ( $\alpha = .9172$ ); (d) POA ( $\alpha = .8721$ ); (e) QC ( $\alpha = .9005$ ); (f) AS ( $\alpha = .8985$ ); and (g) S ( $\alpha = .9106$ ). Based on these findings, sufficient reliability was deemed present for the seven factors.

**Table 1a**  
**Factor analysis rotated component matrix**

Question Number	MPT	ALM	SA	POA	QC	AS	S
9				.556			
10	.749						
11	.610						
13	.735						
14	.621						
18				.550			
19				.531			
20		.649					
21							.702
22		.705					
23		.578					
24	.686						
25	.756						
26				.575			
27				.748			
28				.564			
30				.616			
31							.713
32		.737					
33		.592					
35						.795	
36						.787	
37						.749	
38						.657	
39						.723	
41	.543						
42	.578						
43	.617						

*Note.* Loadings < .50 are omitted from the table to facilitate interpretation. MPT = Manpower, personnel, and training; ALM = Administrative; legal; and morale, welfare, and recreation; SA = Shipboard activities; POA = Planning, operations, and analysis; QC = Qualifications and credibility; AS = Assignments to sea; and S = Safety.

**Table 1b**  
**Factor analysis rotated component matrix**

Question Number	MPT	ALM	SA	POA	QC	AS	S
44		.648					
46							.773
47		.664					
49		.662					
50	.689						
51	.727						
52							
53							.759
54				.551			
55				.720			
56				.613			
57	.566						
58	.632						
59	.586						
61		.681					
63		.663					
64			.821				
65			.693				
66			.663				
67			.722				
68			.836				
69			.823				
70			.724				
71			.733				
72					.541		
74					.623		
75					.667		
76					-.505		
77					-.633		
78					-.757		
79					-.843		
80					-.752		

*Note.* Loadings < .50 are omitted from the table to facilitate interpretation. MPT = Manpower, personnel, and training; ALM = Administrative; legal; and morale, welfare, and recreation; SA = Shipboard activities; POA = Planning, operations, and analysis; QC = Qualifications and credibility; AS = Assignments to sea; and S = Safety.

## Inferential Statistical Analyses

Tables 2a and 2b provide means and standard deviations for each demographic identifier as compared to the seven computed factors. Means were compared across identifiers; *t* values and significance levels are presented.

**Table 2a**  
**Categorical identifier's mean values, standard deviations, t values, and significance levels**

Identifier		MPT	ALM	SA	POA	QC	AS	S
<b>Sex</b>								
Male	M	-.10	.08	.07	-.06	-.02	-.03	.05
	SD	1.00	.98	.99	.95	1.02	1.01	.96
Female	M	.89	-.70	-.67	.53	.21	.24	-.44
	SD	.41	.94	.88	1.31	.76	.94	1.30
	t(82)	-2.92*	2.30*	2.22*	-1.74**	-.68	-.79	1.45
	p	.01	.03	.03	.09	.50	.43	.15
<b>Age</b>								
Less than 35	M	-.41	.07	.26	.26	-.26	.00	.11
	SD	.90	.93	.92	.98	1.12	.86	1.09
More than 35	M	.02	-.04	-.13	-.14	.14	.00	-.06
	SD	1.05	1.04	1.02	.99	.91	1.07	.96
	t(82)	-.27	.47	1.70**	1.73**	-1.74**	.01	.69
	p	.79	.64	.09	.09	.09	.99	.48
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>								
White/European American	M	-.01	.00	-.03	.01	.02	.03	-.10
	SD	.99	.98	.98	.93	.94	1.01	.93
Minority racial/ethnic groups	M	.25	.16	.07	.02	-.02	.13	.55
	SD	.73	1.01	1.02	1.32	1.34	.67	1.11
	t(82)	.95	.56	.34	.04	-.13	.37	2.30*
	p	.34	.58	.73	.97	.90	.71	.02
<b>Education</b>								
Master's degree	M	-.08	-.03	-.22	.12	.09	-.07	-.00
	SD	1.10	1.00	.91	1.12	1.02	1.00	1.04
Bachelor's degree	M	.15	.06	.39	-.21	-.16	.12	.01
	SD	.77	1.02	1.05	.71	.95	1.00	.95
	t(82)	-1.04	-.41	-2.73*	1.48	1.10	-.83	-.06
	p	.30	.68	.01	.14	.27	.41	.95

\* Significant at .05 (two-tailed)

\*\* Significant at .1 (two-tailed)

MPT = Manpower, Personnel, and Training; ALM = Administrative; Legal; and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation; SA = Shipboard Activities; POA = Planning, Operations, and Analysis; QC = Qualifications and Credibility; AS = Assignments to Sea; and S = Safety.

**Table 2b**  
**Categorical identifier's mean values, standard deviations, *t* values, and significance levels**

Identifier		MPT	ALM	SA	POA	QC	AS	S
<b>Years of Service</b>								
Less than 20 years of service	M	-.08	-.03	.08	-.06	-.09	.01	.00
	SD	.98	.98	1.06	1.03	1.02	.98	.97
More than 20 years of service	M	.29	.11	-.31	.21	.34	-.04	-.00
	SD	1.06	1.08	.68	.87	.84	1.11	1.15
	t(82)	-1.40	-.52	1.45	-.99	-1.57	.19	.01
	p	.18	.61	.15	.32	.12	.85	.99
<b>Rank</b>								
CAPT, CDR, LCDR (Senior officers)	M	-.01	.01	-.09	-.01	.14	-.01	-.02
	SD	1.03	1.04	.97	1.02	.92	1.04	.94
LT, LTJG, ENS (Junior officers)	M	.03	-.02	.27	.01	-.42	.02	.07
	SD	.94	.91	1.08	.97	1.13	.88	1.19
	t(82)	.17	-.10	1.41	.03	-2.22*	.12	.35
	p	.87	.93	.16	.98	.03	.91	.73
<b>Community</b>								
Surface/Submarine	M	-.11	.09	.26	.17	-.28	-.08	.30
	SD	1.06	1.01	.89	.86	1.11	.93	.99
Aviation, Fleet Support, and other	M	.20	-.24	-.16	-.01	.26	.02	-.37
	SD	.99	1.04	1.10	1.11	.65	1.21	1.01
	t(82)	-1.24	1.32	1.76	.74	-2.38*	-.39	2.75*
	p	.22	.19	.08	.46	.02	.70	.01
<b>Experience with HR officers</b>								
0-6 HR officers served with	M	.01	-.02	.04	-.04	.04	.05	.04
	SD	.97	.99	1.01	1.01	.95	.96	.94
7 or more HR officers served with	M	-.01	.01	-.47	.14	-.23	-.13	-.10
	SD	1.23	1.19	.77	.90	1.25	1.06	1.18
	t(82)	.08	-.11	1.79**	-.64	.89	.62	.48
	p	.94	.91	.08	.52	.38	.54	.64

\* Significant at .05 (two-tailed)

\*\* Significant at .1 (two-tailed)

MPT = Manpower, personnel, and training; ALM = Administrative; legal; and morale, welfare, and recreation; SA = Shipboard activities; POA = Planning, operations, and analysis; QC = Qualifications and credibility; AS = Assignments to sea; and S = Safety.

Demographic identifiers were grouped such that means, standard deviations, *t* values, and significance levels could be determined. Groupings divided along commonly occurring themes. Males were contrasted with females. Age division occurred along an under 35/over 35 years line. The majority (i.e., White/European American) racial ethnic division was contrasted against a grouped minority category. Officers possessing

master's degrees were contrasted against those with bachelor's degrees. Officers were grouped at the 20 years of service line—the minimum retirement requirement. Senior officers (i.e., captain, commander, and lieutenant commander) were contrasted against junior officers (i.e., lieutenant, lieutenant junior grade, and ensign). Groupings by community affiliation were performed. Surface and Submarine warfare officers were categorized because of their similarity of service while Aviation, Fleet Support, Special Warfare, and Special Operations officers were combined. Finally, those URL officers reporting service with six or less HR officers in the two years prior to survey were contrasted with those reporting service with seven or more HR officers in the two years prior to survey.

## Discussion

Evaluation of categorical descriptive identifiers' means, standard deviations, *t* values, and significance levels were performed. Student *t* values at the .05 and .1 levels were considered significant, providing indication of positive or negative opinion for the identifier by factor.

A comparison of means by sex to the Manpower, Personnel, and Training (MPT) factor indicated that females ( $M = .89$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) are of a stronger opinion than males ( $M = -.10$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) that MPT is a role for HR officers  $t(82) = -2.92$ ,  $p = .01$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ . In a comparison of means of sex against the Administrative; Legal; and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (ALM) factor, females tended not to view these functions for HR officers ( $M = -.70$ ,  $SD = .94$ ); whereas, male officers expressed little clear opinion ( $M = .08$ ,  $SD = .98$ )  $t(82) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .03$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ . In the Shipboard Activity (SA) factor, females did not view these activities as tasks that should be performed by HR officers ( $M = -.67$ ,  $SD = .88$ ) while male officers expressed no clear opinion ( $M = .07$ ,  $SD = .99$ )  $t(82) = 2.22$ ,  $p = .03$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ . Female officers saw Planning, Operations, and Analysis (POA) as roles for HR officers ( $M = .53$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) while males remained neutral on this subject ( $M = -.06$ ,  $SD = .95$ )  $t(82) = -1.74$ ,  $p = .09$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Unrestricted line officers less than 35 years of age tended to be of the opinion that HR officers should be involved in Shipboard Activities (SA) ( $M = .26$ ,  $SD = .92$ )  $t(82) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .09$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ . That same group endorses HR officers performing in Planning, Operations, and Analysis (POA) functions ( $M = .26$ ,  $SD = .98$ )  $t(82) = 1.73$ ,  $p = .09$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ . This group expressed a negative view in Qualifications and Credibility (QC) ( $M = -.26$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ )  $t(82) = -1.74$ ,  $p = .09$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

In a comparison of means of the race/ethnicity identifier to the Safety (S) factor, minority members demonstrated an opinion that Safety is central to HR officers' roles ( $M = .55$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ )  $t(82) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .02$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Using education as an identifier, a significant departure occurred between those officers with bachelor's degrees versus those with master's degrees when evaluated with the Shipboard Activities (SA) factor. Unrestricted line officers with bachelor's degrees viewed positively HR officers' role in these activities ( $M = .39$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ); whereas, those officers with master's degrees presented a more negative opinion ( $M = -.22$ ,  $SD = .91$ )  $t(82) = -2.73$ ,  $p = .01$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Years of service were compared with each of the seven factors. No statistically significant findings resulted based on this identifier. Years of service were not a significant factor in determining perception of HR roles.

Evaluations of rank versus the seven factors indicated that junior officers (i.e., LT, LTJG, and ENS) perceived that HR officers do not have the requisite Qualifications and/or Credibility (QC) that qualifies them above any other officer to perform HR functions ( $M = -.42$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ )  $t(82) = -2.22$ ,  $p = .03$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Opinions expressed by community affiliation to each of the factors appeared to demonstrate wide-varying opinion. Opinions were divided between Surface and Submarine officers on one side and Aviation, Fleet Support, Special Warfare, and Special Operations officers on the other in questions of Qualifications and Credibility (QC) of HR officers. Surface and Submarine officers demonstrated generally negative attitudes towards HR officers ( $M = -.28$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ). In contrast, Aviation, Fleet Support, Special Warfare, and Special Operations officers expressed the opposite opinion ( $M = .26$ ,  $SD = .65$ )  $t(82) = -2.38$ ,  $p = .02$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Division existed along these same lines when questioned about HR officers' role in Safety (S) management. Surface and Submarine officers expressed an opinion that HR officers should be involved in these sorts of activities ( $M = .30$ ,  $SD = .99$ ). This was not the case for Aviation, Fleet Support, Special Operation, and Special Warfare officers ( $M = -.37$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ )  $t(82) = 2.75$ ,  $p = .01$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

Evaluations of URL officers who have served with less than six HR officers in the previous two years versus those who reported working with seven or more diverged. Those serving with more than seven HR officers demonstrated a strong opinion that HR officers should not be involved in Shipboard activities (SA) ( $M = -.47$ ,  $SD = .77$ )  $t(82) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .08$  (two-tailed),  $d = .5$ .

## Conclusions

This study seeks answers to two specific questions: (a) What roles do unrestricted line officers perceive should be filled by HR officers? and (b) Does the HR community have the skills and credibility necessary to provide warfighters with the HR support needed from these roles?

Summation of the data compiled and analyzed indicates that unrestricted line officers generally perceive HR officers filling Manpower, Personnel, and Training (MPT), Administrative; Legal, and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (ALM), Shipboard

Activities (SA), and Planning, Operations, and Analysis (POA) roles. Arguably, division occurs between unrestricted line officers by sex and age but, viewed in totality, these general themes emerge.

In response to the question of HR community credibility, overall, these data indicate that a neutral perception exists within unrestricted line communities. The anecdotal evidence surrounding HR community credibility that prompted this research appears to be more centered within the HR community itself rather from outside. It appears that the HR community might have a more negative view of itself than others have of the community. This issue of credibility might not be a credibility issue at all, but might be more of a self-efficacy, self-image, or self-respect issue.



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## **Appendix: Survey Instrument**



## U.S. NAVY HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICERS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING FLEET OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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The U.S. Navy's Human Resources Officer Community was established in October 2001 to provide a cadre of career professionals that have the requisite skills and competencies to lead the Navy in the competition to recruit, train, and retain sailors as well as work the challenges of balancing military, civilian, and contracted capabilities. The Human Resources Community is designed to fully focus on aligning "people" policies and processes with the Navy's overall maritime mission while providing expertise in strategic human resources planning, programming, and execution. You have been selected to take part in this study, which seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the role U.S. Navy Human Resources officers can and should have in meeting fleet operational requirements.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Your survey responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Please take time to give careful, frank answers. It will take no more than 15 minutes to complete this survey. Thank you for your participation.

### PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Authority to request this information is granted under Title 5, U.S. Code 301 and Department of Navy Regulations.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data in order to gain a deeper understanding of the role U.S. Navy Human Resources Officers can and should have in meeting fleet operational requirements.

**ROUTINE USES:** The researcher will analyze the information provided in this questionnaire and will maintain data files where they may be used to determine changing trends.

**ANONYMITY:** No one will have access to individual responses except the researcher. Your responses will be combined with those of others so that general statements about the role U.S. Navy Human Resources officers can and should have in meeting fleet operational requirements can be made. Your responses to this questionnaire will have no impact on you or your career.

**PARTICIPATION:** Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary. Failure to respond to any of the questions will NOT result in any penalties except possible lack of representation of your views in the final results and outcomes. There is no compensation provided for participation in this study.

Questions or concerns about this study can be addressed to Institutional Review Board, Capella University or the Navy Personnel Command Institutional Review Board.

RETURN OF THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTITUTES AGREEMENT TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Instructions

Your candid and honest responses are sought to the following questions. The responses sought are those that most closely represent your feelings or beliefs about the statement being considered. Select only one response for each question posed. Carefully read the brief instructions that are given prior to each section. Your involvement in this assessment is anonymous and confidential.

**START HERE**

**Section 1**

1. What is your sex?

Male              Female

2. Please write your age on the line below.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

Asian/Pacific Islander

Multicultural/Other

Black/African American

Native American/Alaskan Native

Hispanic (all origins)

White/European American

4. What is your highest level of education attained?

Less than a high school diploma

BA/BS or equivalent

High school diploma or equivalent

MA/MS/MBA or equivalent

Some college/Technical trade school

Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D./Ed.D./MD/  
DVM/DDS/JD or equivalent)

AA/AS/AAS or equivalent

5. Please write the number (in whole years) you have served on active duty in the U.S. Navy.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your current rank (not selected or frocked)?

ADM

CDR

VADM

LCDR

RADM

LT

RDML

LTJG

CAPT

ENS

7. Please write your designator in the spaces indicated below (e. g., 1110, 1320, etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How many Human Resources officers have you served or had interaction with over the last two years?

0–3

11–15

4–6

More than 16

7–10

In the next section, feel free to use the entire spectrum of answer possibilities (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree including Not Applicable) as shown below.

**PLEASE INSERT AN "X" IN THE COLUMN THAT REFLECTS YOUR VIEW.**

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

**Section 2** In this section, please respond to each statement as you believe it applies to Human Resources officers role in supporting fleet operational requirements.

HR officers should perform the following activities

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
9	strategic planning						
10	manpower management						
11	recruitment						
12	education and training						
13	personnel force management						
14	career management						
15	administration						
16	human resource information technology management						
17	financial management						



<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Human Resources officers should perform the following activities

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
18	research and development						
19	metrics/statistical analysis						
20	morale, welfare, and recreation						
21	safety management						
22	legal administration						

I view HR officers as

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
23	administrative managers						
24	personnel managers						
25	manpower managers						
26	metrics/statistical analysts						
27	operations analysts						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

I view Human Resources officers as

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
28	researchers						
29	financial managers						
30	business operations managers						
31	safety managers						
32	legal administrators						
33	morale, welfare, and recreation managers						
34	information technology managers						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Human Resources officers should be assigned to

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
35	ships						
36	submarines						
37	deployable aircraft squadrons (e.g., VFA, HSL, etc.)						
38	special operations/warfare units (e.g., EOD, SEAL, etc.)						
39	operational staffs (e.g., DESRON, CARGRU, C2F, etc.)						
40	waterfront training activities (e.g., AFLOATRAGRU, FLTCOMTRACEN, Aegis Training Center, Fleet Training Center, etc.)						
41	administrative staffs that directly support operational units (e.g., COMNAVAIRPAC, COMLANTFLT, etc.)						
42	administrative staffs that provide Navy-wide support (e.g., COMNAVPERSCOM, COMNAVCRUITCOM, NETC, BUPERS, OPNAV, SECNAV, SECDEF, etc.)						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Human Resources officers in **OPERATIONAL** units should fill billets as

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
43	training officers						
44	administrative officers						
45	personnel officers						
46	safety officers						
47	legal officers						
48	any billet available to unrestricted line officers						

Human Resources officers in **SUPPORT** units should fill billets in

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
49	administration management						
50	personnel management						
51	manpower management						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Human Resources officers in **SUPPORT** units should fill billets in

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
52	financial management						
53	safety management						
54	metrics/statistical analysis						
55	operations analysis						
56	research and development						
57	recruiter						
58	educator, teacher, trainer, training manager						
59	career counselor, detailer						
60	business operations						
61	legal administration						
62	information technology management						
63	morale, welfare, and recreation						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

I believe Human Resources officers can and should, with training, participate in operational units as

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
64	conning officer/junior officer of the deck						
65	officer of the deck underway						
66	tactical action officer						
67	engineering officer of the watch						
68	repair locker officer						
69	underway replenishment safety officer						
70	helicopter control officer/landing signals officer						
71	flight deck safety officer						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Provide your degree of agreement/disagreement with the following statements concerning your attitude or perception of the Human Resources officers community

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
72	In general, HR officers are of equal caliber professionally to unrestricted line officers.						
73	HR officers are equally adept with URLs in policy decision-making.						
74	HR officers are equally qualified with unrestricted line officers to assume command in assignments that match their skill sets.						
75	Officers become HRs because they have education and experience in human resources management and can provide the Navy valuable service.						
76	If an HR officer is not available to fill an HR billet, a URL officer, LDO, CWO, or senior enlisted can fill this role without organizational impact.						
77	Officers become HRs because they are not competitive in warfighting.						

<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Provide your degree of agreement/disagreement with the following statements concerning your attitude or perception of the Human Resources Officers community.

		<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>
78	Officers transition to the HR community to avoid sea duty.						
79	The HR community is made up of male officers who are not successful in warfighting and women.						
80	SWO non-attainees, nuclear/submarine school drops, and flight attrites become HRs.						

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!

Please return your completed survey as soon as possible.



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